

## **AG Whitehouse Outlines RI Lead Paint Poison Problems, Solutions and Lawsuit for US Senate panel**

Washington – Attorney General Sheldon Whitehouse today testified in detail before a US Senate panel in Washington of the seriousness of the problem of lead paint poisoning in Rhode Island, and of the numerous programs and organizations working with the families of poisoned children. Whitehouse also detailed his lawsuit against the manufacturers of lead paint pigment and their association, and his efforts to get the manufacturers to take responsibility for their actions and to come into Rhode Island to clean up their mess.

Appearing before the Senate Subcommittee on Housing and Transportation, at the request of the committee's chairman, RI Senator Jack Reed, Whitehouse testified that Rhode Island has earned the dubious distinction by the Massachusetts Conservation Law Foundation as being the lead poison capitol of the United States. Whitehouse explained the rate of lead poisoned children is two and a half times higher than in the rest of the United States. In Providence the rate is four times higher than the rest of the country.

Whitehouse told the committee, "Blood, toil, tears and sweat were Winston Churchill's exemplars of effort. In Rhode Island, the blood is given by infants and small children who must be regularly tested, and in some cases have their blood chelated. The tears are shed by family members who discover, often too late, and often despite very reasonable levels of maintenance of their homes, that their child has become lead poisoned. The toil and sweat come from the men and women of these community organizations who every day administer to the many needs of families facing these uncertainties."

Addressing his first in the nation lawsuit filed by a state against the manufacturers of lead pigment and their association said, "I am just a small state Attorney General, and this lawsuit has provided me my first experience of national level spin. I will not bore you here with a description of the various characterizations of this lawsuit, characterizations of my motivations or characterizations of the facts of lead paint poisoning. It will suffice to say that we wish as quickly as possible to bring this case forward, so that we can present the state's case and the defendants can present theirs, and a decision can be made not on rhetoric or spin but on evidence and facts. One way or the other, our case will stand or fall on its factual and legal merit. We look for the outcome of that process to be a fair and sensible order requiring the defendants to contribute in a fair and sensible way to the clean up of the mess they made.

Whitehouse concluded his testimony by telling the committee, "If Rhode Island is to be considered the lead paint capitol of the United States, then let it as well be considered the capitol of lead paint solutions—solutions to a silent public health menace to our children and to children throughout the United States."